MEETING OF THE STATES PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON THE PROHIBITION OF THE USE, STOCKPILING, PRODUCTION AND TRANSFER OF ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES AND ON THEIR DESTRUCTION

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INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND ASSISTANCE IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLE 6

Report of the Standing Committee of Experts on Stockpile Destruction to the Second Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention

I. Introduction

1. The Standing Committee of Experts (SCE) on Stockpile Destruction, established in accordance with the decisions and recommendations of the 3-7 May 1999 First Meeting of the States Parties (FMSP), met in Geneva from 9-10 December 1999 and from 22-23 May 2000.

2. At the FMSP, it was agreed, in accordance with paragraph 25 of the final report of the FMSP and its annex IV, that Hungary and the Mali would serve as Co-Chairs of the SCE, with Malaysia and Slovakia serving as Co-Rapporteurs.

3. Representatives of 47 States, United Nations bodies, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) and numerous other relevant organizations were registered as participants in either or both of the two meetings.

4. The meetings of the SCE received administrative support from the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD).

II. Matters reviewed by the SCE

5. The SCE solicited the views of delegations with respect to the following thematic areas: stockpile destruction as an integral part of mine action; allocation of resources - technologies and constraints; case studies; stockpile destruction as preventive mine action; cooperative structures for stockpile destruction; and the way ahead. The SCE noted its appreciation of the work of the following moderators: Ret. Gen. Gordon M. Reay, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Canada; Patrick Blagden, GICHD; Col. Paul Power, Australian Defense Forces; Steve Goose, Human Rights Watch; and, Adrian Wilkinson, Mine Action Consultant, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

6. The SCE considered a number of practical issues with a view to highlighting the importance of the core objective of the SCE, namely to facilitate a swift and dramatic reduction in the number of stockpiled anti-personnel mines globally, including the following:

- ensuring political priority for stockpile destruction;
- obligations and rights of countries under Article 4 of the Convention;
- merits and constraints of various methods and technologies for destruction as experienced by individual countries;
- the role of the military and private sector in stockpile destruction;
- logistical, technical and financial considerations;
- possible alternatives to the current methods of stockpile destruction;
- planning and implementation of the process leading up to the actual destruction of stockpiles;
- merits and constraints of various methods of destruction as experienced by individual countries;
- financial and technical assistance – bilateral, multilateral and regional approaches to stockpile destruction;
- compilation of a database of industrial/research capacities and capabilities;
- possible mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating Article 7 reports;
- assessing overall progress with regard to stockpile destruction; progress report on global stockpiles and their destruction;
- flow of information on available technologies, costs and environmental impact;
- modalities of transfer and storage of foreign stockpiles;
- avoiding competition among the various branches and actors of mine action;
- planning and implementation of the process leading up to the actual destruction of stockpiles;
- engaging the media and the public at large in the process of stockpile destruction;
- need for accounting and certification procedures;
- compilation of databases on donors, recipients, needs, methods, options, companies, experts; and,
- possible mechanisms for engaging non-States parties in reducing their stockpiles.

7. It was expected that discussion on all the above matters would continue in the Convention's intersessional program.

8. As a result of the SCE's deliberations, it was accepted that stockpile destruction is an integral part, in effect the "fifth pillar", of mine action and that, accordingly, compliance with Article 4 obligations should receive high political priority. It was also stressed, however, that this does not suggest unwarranted competition among the different branches of mine action.

9. At the FMSP, participants emphasized the need for the rapid universalization of, adherence to and compliance with the Convention and, in parallel, the importance of prompt and strict compliance with the obligations as stipulated in Article 4. Accordingly, States were urged to comply with their reporting obligations under Article 7 as a way to facilitate future cooperation between prospective donor States and those requesting assistance in carrying out this important task. In the course of its intersessional work, the Committee sought ways to ensure that the capabilities and capacities of prospective donor States become fully compatible with the needs of States requesting assistance. In addition, the SCE reviewed a wide range of technical options for stockpile destruction, which was introduced in the course of the sessions for consideration.

III. Actions taken or in process on the development of specific tools and instruments in order to assist the implementation of the Convention

10. A website related to stockpile destruction is expected to be introduced by the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) and Canada by September 2000 and States were encouraged to contribute to this effort. Proposed UNDP guidelines on stockpile destruction will be made available on the web, as well.

11. A list of companies, experts and technologies related to stockpile destruction is also expected to be introduced in the near future. A cumulative list of companies, experts and technologies could provide a necessary link between the "donor" and "recipient" countries when designing future cooperative structures.

12. Regarding monitoring and verification requirements, a number of presentations have already been prepared, which serve as good examples. It was acknowledged that case study presentations are a useful tool for maintaining political enthusiasm and that a standardized format for the case study presentations could be identified vis-a-vis the ones that have been presented up to date.

13. The submission of (annual) national progress reports on stockpile destruction was not a matter of consensus at this point of time. It was observed that there are a number of relevant questions not included in the Article 7 reporting format; therefore, a proposal for a separate questionnaire on stockpile destruction was entertained.

14. The important role the ICBL *Landmine Monitor* plays in reporting on the global stockpile destruction process and contributing to greater transparency on this issue was highly appreciated.

IV. Actions taken or in process to assist in the implementation of the Convention

15. The need for additional resources to be secured for stockpile destruction projects was stressed. To this end, the sessions considered various bilateral, multilateral and regional approaches as possible components for establishing cooperative structures for stockpile destruction projects. The initiative launched by Canada and Ukraine was cited in this regard as a useful example for bilateral cooperation, while the establishment of a Partnership for Peace (PfP) Trust Fund for stockpile destruction within the framework of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) was singled out as a promising multilateral/regional project with a view to facilitating broad compliance with Article 4 obligations.

16. More than a dozen countries provided insights into their experience with stockpile destruction and representatives offered their respective views with regard to the merits and constraints of various methods of destruction as experienced by individual countries. Financial, technical, social and environmental considerations were also discussed at length, and emphasis was placed on the need for careful planning and implementation of the process leading up to the actual destruction of stockpiles. The importance of engaging the media and the public at large in the process of stockpile destruction was also highlighted by various delegations.

17. The SCE compared the converging or diverging approaches taken by the military and civil sectors in the actions needed for eliminating stockpiled anti-personnel mines. In most cases, it was argued, stockpile destruction in military facilities leads to a substantial reduction of incurred expenses and entails the more efficient utilization of already existing resources. Transparency in this process is also of critical importance, a fact about which the armed forces should be educated. An important role should be assigned to players outside the military to ensure maximum transparency in the process of stockpile destruction (governmental agencies, mass media, diplomatic corps, etc.).

18. The possible roles of UNMAS and UNDP in stockpile destruction projects were also discussed. With its 137 regional centres worldwide, the UNDP could facilitate various bilateral or multilateral arrangements with a view to promoting information exchange and technical/financial cooperation in this field. Although the UN agencies are traditionally involved in humanitarian demining activities, the possibility of expanding their activities to facilitate stockpile destruction should not be excluded. The possible modalities of such UN involvement, e.g., transparency and lessons learned and shared, and financial assistance, were also discussed.

19. Retention of stockpiled anti-personnel mines for training and development purposes under Article 3 was also discussed at length, although the Co-Chairs made the determination that the issue should be referred to the Standing Committee of Experts on the General Status and Operation of the Convention for further deliberation.

20. Generally, it was agreed that examination of all options and factors should lead to the destruction of global stocks in the fastest, most cost-effective way and with the least harmful effects to the environment. It was also emphasized that the possibility of adverse environmental impacts brought about by the destruction process should not be used as an excuse for inaction in meeting Article 4 obligations.

21. The Committee agreed that, at the Second Meeting of the States Parties, the urgency and importance of stockpile destruction should be affirmed.

V. Recommendations made by the SCE

22. It was recommended that those countries that have completed the destruction of their stockpiles should make their expertise available to those in need, because in many instances countries lack the technical experience, industrial capacities or know-how to carry out obligations stipulated in Article 4 of the Convention.

23. It was recommended that States be encouraged to contribute to the questionnaire presented by Canada in support of the development of an UNMAS website on stockpile destruction.

24. With regard to a complementary database to the Article 7 reports, it was recommended that the SCE Co-Chairs, in cooperation with interested parties, work to develop a questionnaire that would help collect information on needs and assistance offers expressed by non-States parties.

25. It was recommended that the SCE Co-Chairs develop specific language on recommendations concerning bilateral and multilateral/regional cooperative structures for stockpile destruction.

26. It was recommended that an examination of all options and factors should lead to the destruction of global stocks in the fastest, most cost-effective way and with the least harmful effects to the environment.